



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

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NEWS • RELEASE

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Fires Near Linville Gorge Continue to Burn

Two wildfires on the Pisgah National Forest near Linville Gorge in Burke County continued to burn today. Approximately 200 federal and state firefighters are fighting the blazes using a combination of bulldozers, hand crews, fire engines, helicopters and air tankers.

As of 6 pm Monday the Dobson Knob fire, three miles north of Lake James, had burned approximately 540 acres. The Shortoff Mountain fire has also burned about 700 acres on the east side of Linville River within the Linville Gorge Wilderness.

At this time, the fires are burning entirely on national forest lands and pose no direct threat to adjacent private lands or homes. To ensure public safety, the U.S. Forest Service has closed all trails and campsites within the Linville Gorge Wilderness until further notice.

“The fires continued to actively burn through the night,” said Forest Service Information Officer Bill Sweet. “Today the humidity has been somewhat higher so the fires have put up a lot of smoke but are not spreading as fast,” Sweet said. “Because of the cloud cover, adjacent communities may notice more smoke from the fires settling in the valleys overnight,” Sweet added.

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At this time the Forest Service does not have an estimate of when these two fires will be contained. Firefighters plan to keep building and securing control lines around the perimeter of the fires. They may also use “back burning” to clear out combustible fuels inside these control lines to make it more difficult for the wildfires to jump the lines.

The hot, dry weather the last two months in western North Carolina has created unusually high fire danger conditions for this late in the season. “The extended drought and a buildup of dead pines killed by southern pine beetle outbreaks have combined to cause these fires to burn much hotter and spread faster than what we normally see”, said U.S. Forest spokesman Terry Seyden.

The public can check for updated fire information at the National Forests in North Carolina website <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>.

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